

Danes, Swedes and Norse did some excellent exhibitions. Particularly well done was their Danish Vals Fra Hadsund, a dance for several sets of trios. They followed up with other excellently danced numbers: Hardangunvals and Nordlandigen, both Norse dances. Peter Olsen, well loved old timer of the Scandinavians in the Twin-City area, is their instructor.

The Swedes were represented by a large group of well trained teen-agers who danced the Swedish Reinlander, Windmill, Ox Dansen, Fryksdalspolska and Clapp Dance. The interpretation of the Ox Dance by four young men was especially excellent. It was class A-1 stuff. But all their numbers were good. They were trained by Harold Henning who spent several years in Sweden and was the leader of the Swedish dancers even prior his Svensk trip.

The general dancing to Arne Sandquist's orchestra consisted mainly of sets of waltz, schottische, hambo and polka with an occasional tango or other form of round dances. It was particularly enjoyable to watch real Scandinavians do the hambo, each one having a style of their own or their own interpretation, unlike at the non-Scandinavian folk dance places where synthetic Swedes demand uniformity or condemn it as "un-authentic". Hambos, like kolos, depend upon a region one hails from, and is done according to the manner of that region. The character and carriage is the same and native, but foot work and interpretation is individual.

At one time 18 Scandinavian groups belonged to the Nordic League and they met annually in various parts of the North-Midwest. Then, these conclaves were truly spectacular. The League is now reduced to seven groups. Lack of leadership and rapid assimilation among the Nordics are the causes of depletion. Here is hoping for a bright and strong future to the League.

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DANCING IN DENVER UNDER STARS

Drusilla Ferree

In Denver every Tuesday evening during July and August it seems the stars shine brighter and the storm clouds disappear — maybe this happens only because our feet are light and our hearts are gay — but Tuesday is the night folk dancers don their gay apparel and enjoy an evening of dancing under the stars in the Greek Theatre of Denver's Civic Center — as the chimes in the large clock atop Denver City and County Building strike eight, the music begins and it is "on with the dance."

This evening of Folk Dancing is sponsored by the Denver City Recreation Department and is without charge to either dancers or spectators. Many folk dance groups and ethnic groups join in the fun and usually during intermission time a special demonstration is given.

During this summer of '53 for the enjoyment of dancers and spectators some of the demonstrations were given by a group of Sioux Indians who now live on Lookout Mtn. west of Denver, Swedish Ethnic group (Hans Bookstrom, leader), Mexican Ethnic group (Mr. Olvera, leader), Sherwood Folk Dance Group (Fay Ferree, leader), Japanese Buddhist Group, Mile High Folk Dance Group (Jim Fenton, Pres.). After the exhibition many times the demonstration dancers would invite all the dancers to come in and learn one of their dances.

Vyts Beliajus while on his stop-over in Denver on his way to the west coast very graciously gave his time and talents and instructed us in several dances one Tuesday evening.

Mr. and Mrs. Merl Dougherty from Richland, Wash-

ington while on vacation in Colorado came and danced with us and also demonstrated the Schuhplattler they do in their section of the country.

The season is over for dancing at Civic Center but the Folk Dancers haven't put away their dancing shoes — they enjoy it year around and are looking forward to next summer when they will again dance under the stars, and hope their folk dancing friends the world around will come and join in the Tuesday evenings of Folk dance fun at Civic Center in Denver.

Nor do they slight those who like Square Dancing. During the summer most every evening you can find some place to dance where the stars are the only roof over your head, but you will find Friday evening at Civic Center a big evening for square dance fans for there you will find real live music and callers from Denver and vicinity, and many times we have the opportunity to dance to callers from other sections of the country.

So whether you have square dance clothes or folk dance outfits you will be able to find the dance of your choice here in the Mile High City of Denver.

U. N. BIRTHDAY PARTIES

In many cities and communities Americans were celebrating the 10th birthday of the founding of the United Nations during the week of Oct. 18-24. Every sponsoring group endeavored to make it as impressive and as colorful as possible.

In Chicago the U. N. Week was opened at the exclusive Knickerbocker in their beautiful grand ballroom. Various foreign legations set up booths with exhibits of crafts, wares and travel propaganda. There was much of authentic international atmosphere. The program itself, however, for a big city as is Chicago and with so much to offer, was its weakest part. None of the performing groups were outstanding. Most seemed to be youngsters who just started to learn. Then, too, much too much time was allotted per group and too few groups participated. Four groups; Mexicans, Arabs, Scots and Chinese consumed (really consumed) about an hour and a half. The Mexicans performed La Bamba, Las Espuelas, Jarabe Tapatio and three songs. The Arabs were a novelty as they are seen so very little in Chicago. Their instrumental renditions were unique and interesting. Two songs sung by a charming Arab Miss was fascinating. Three belly dancers, headed by Miss Fedwa Abed, danced for the longest of time and tried hard to imitate the burlesque stuff in order to please the Europeans and it almost bordered on the ridiculous. The finger cymbals which they wore were barely used. Will skip the Scots. The Chinese presented a New Year Dragon (more properly, Lion) gyration. It was a small dragon of two boys who did well.

The door prizes were terrific. Each basket was a present from a legation worth anywhere from 25 to 75 dollars of imported foods, wines and native craft. About 20 such baskets were given away.



The hand that lifts the cup that cheers should not be used to shift the gears.

The lawyer got his client a suspended sentence — they hanged him.

4th INTERNATIONAL SQUARE DANCE FESTIVAL

Chicago's huge amphitheater, which is accustomed to seeing many immense scale exhibitions, from prize bulls to prize autos and what have you, was, on October 24th, the scene where a supper - dupper Square Dance Pageant took place. 10,000 dance fiends jammed the place and had one grand time. The festival itself began at 8 AM and closed at 11:30 PM, but it was preceded with "evenings before" and continued with "after-party parties" in other parts of the city, for some people didn't find 16 hours of dancing sufficient.

There was much going on simultaneously. The big arena had the rehearsals, demonstration and mass dancing. The upper floors were divided into four seasons: Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, with each properly decorated in accordance with the season of the year and in each of these huge sections more dancing was going on to various guest callers. What a mad house! But an enjoyable and a spectacular one. Lectures and work shop was held in the Summer Hall, folk dancing in the Spring Hall, Squares and more squares in the Winter and Autumn Halls. Then, there were the booths of display and sales and people everywhere — people in a gay, holiday mood dressed in their square dance fineries and here and there even some nationality costumes were seen, but on the main it was a square dancers world.

Among the guest callers there was Al Brundage, Don Armstrong, Ralph Maxhimer, Ed Gilmore, The Collettes, Lycyan Ziemba, Mac McKenrik, Roger Knapp, Manning Smith, D. Fresh, Herb Greggerson and others plus the State Delegation Leaders. In the Folk Dance section we had The Dunsings, The Ehrlichs, The Wessons, Emily Mucha and Vyts Beliajus. The honored guest was the inspirator and "Papa" of this whole thing, Dr. Lloyd Shaw.

I have been away for two years. I only saw the very first festival of 1949 at Chicago's Stadium. Then, it was a merry mess which only succeeded in causing alienation and ill feeling, but since that year the transformation was terrific and for the better. Perhaps it is because the Chicago Park District took it over. The Chicago Park District, one could state with positiveness, always sponsored and encouraged the folk arts since way back when . . . when other localities didn't see the wholesome value of the square and folk dance. When others looked down upon it the Chicago Parks boosted it and had folk and square dancing taught in their park system. They presented many small and large scale festivals and one of the first largest folk festivals in the U. S. was held in Chicago's immense Soldier's Field way back in 1936, perhaps this is one of the reasons for the wonderful atmosphere which was evoked from this festival. Much credit to them and to the Chicago Area Callers Association, plus the Prairie Farmer who united in putting over this spectacle so very successfully.

The following criticisms are personal expressions and observations. There was still not enough local color in the square dance demonstrations, that is, still too many groups tried to present Western squares

instead of regional dances, tho this was not as glaring as it was in 1949. Many groups were given to repeat identical or almost identical square patterns thus, during the short period I witnessed the demonstration there were four different groups who used the "Grand Square" figure. That got too tiresome. Round Dances, I do not believe, have room at either folk or square (which is also folk) dance festivals. They belong to the ball rooms and dance studios and should be demonstrated at such places where anyone would expect

Arthur Murray's type of work exhibited. They are not folk expressions, but an individual's brain child and most of the time a "child's brain". The acoustics were horrible. Annoying would seem a mild term. Especially since square dancers seem to think that a record must be put on in full blast and the caller in turn, must try to out-drown the loud music. The acoustics couldn't be helped. One can't obtain immense places and be of excellent acoustical build, but the callers could tone down their music and their shouting. No wonder some of them became hoarse. Who wouldn't?

However, there was much that was wonderful, beautiful and fascinating. And of that we'll speak now.

The overall atmosphere was enjoyable and wholesome. The Chicago demonstration, aside of them being the largest group of nearly a thousand (so it seemed), their contribution was truly colorful and spectacular. They opened the demonstrational part of the evening program using "Hi Neighbor" for their theme. Their dancers covered the entire arena while in the center a large maypole was constantly in motion with dancers weaving in and out. There was so much festive and spectacular color that it seemed fairyland-like. Particularly colorful was likewise the period when a select group demonstrated in the center and all others backed up to the wall with the ladies spreading their gowns rightward. That made a colorful rainbow-like cordon which attracted the eye. Other groups which should get a special applause were: Minnesota, Indiana and Kentucky.

There was one departure from the previous prejudiced tradition which is healthful and should be highly applauded is the inclusion of folk dancing. For the first time a folk dance group was presented who danced three Austrian dances; two Schuhplattles and the Dreisteier and three Austrian students sang a yodeling type of song. They were Dorothy Wesson's group, from Minneapolis, Minn. This is a very good omen. The Minnesota Square Dancers under the direction of Arden Johnson, danced on to do their squares with a Croatian Waltz. Seems as if the ray of sunshine appeared from Minnesota. This introduction of folk dancing must be credited to Jerry Joris who was the tireless General Program chairman, and to the Chicago Park District which is a broad minded organization. Jerry, by the way, wearing her Lithuanian costume, appeared like the well-loved Lithuanian venerated princess-queen Biruta.

This festival will be a part of an editorial in the next VILTIS issue. There is a great deal we can learn from this Festival. As VILTIS must go to press upon the completion of this writing, time does not permit. I'll, therefore, stress once again, taking into consideration some of the faults, most of which were minor and "couldn't be helped", this was a great spectacle. And a "great big hand" should be given to the committees and their chairmen, to the Chicago Park District, to the Chicago Area Callers Ass'n, Prairie Farmers, to the State Leaders and to all who in any way have lent their hand toward making this festival so very successful. Congratulations.

VFB.